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British aristocracy, just as there are among the wealthy classes of America. There are plenty of rich people here whose manners and morals are decidedly vulgar, and, thank goodness, there are some of whom America need not be ashamed. Is it not more than likely that the aristocracy of the Old World comprises many great and good men, and noble and virtuous women, as well as the opposite?

V.

REMINISCENCES OF ALPHONSE DAUDET.

"THIRTY Years of Paris" hardly, perhaps, conveys as a title an idea of the subject matter of M. Alphonse Daudet's book,* at least to the general reader, although the author's name is conspicuous on the paper cover. M. Daudet writes in an agreeable vein of himself as a man of letters, beginning with his entrance into Paris a lad of sixteen, resolved to achieve fame and fortune in literature. He had been an usher in a school and was a raw, country lad. Fortunately, he had an older brother in Paris, who took him for a time under his wing, and he was, therefore, saved from absolute starvation. His first real success in life was an engagement as a writer on *Figaro*, then under the editorial charge of Villemessant, a tyrannical and capricious man, who had no other principles than were begotten of his love of success and power. Villemessant cared little for his literary staff, except to get brilliant work out of them, and as soon as any unfortunate *aide* showed signs of weakness he was summarily dismissed. This was in the "fifties," when Gambetta was making his mark, chiefly among the students of the Quartier Latin. "He was even then," says Daudet, "the man we have all known and admired. Rejoicing in life, rejoicing in talk, this loquacious Roman grafted on a Gallic stock intoxicated himself with the jingle of his own phrases, making the window panes vibrate with the noise of his thundering eloquence, most frequently ending in exuberant explosions of mirth. Both he and his friends were wholly absorbed in politics, and from the Quartier Latin they were already laying siege to the Tuilleries."

From personal reminiscences and sketches the author glides into a narrative of the circumstances connected with the birth of his principal books. This species of talk generally proves to be entertaining if it come from out of the abundance of the heart, and M. Daudet's heart is full of love for his life-work. His great charm as a writer is his closeness to nature. His characters are all drawn from the life. He has often been compared with Charles Dickens, and, curiously enough, he was at one time driven almost to his wit's end to escape the charge of copying one of Dickens' characters. He is, however, no copyist. He gives in these memoirs the story of some of his best characters. There is also, towards the end of the book, an interesting account of an odd club of authors in Paris, then but little known, but all destined afterwards to become famous—Zola, Flaubert, Goncourt, Tourguéneff, and Daudet. Girardin wished to become a member, but as he was not a literary man was refused. The club met monthly at a dinner and styled their festival "the dinner of unsuccessful authors." They dined at seven and never separated before two in the morning. They discussed each other freely and without flattery or mutual admiration, and when they had exhausted themselves on bookish topics they branched off upon the ever present themes and ideas of love and death. Tourguéneff would stretch himself on the sofa and say, "Oh, I never think about death. In our country no one has any very distinct idea on

* Alphonse Daudet: "Thirty Years of Paris." George Routledge & Sons.

the subject ; it is a vague, distant notion, enveloped in the Slavonic mist." It is curious to note the self-deprecatory tone in which these men honestly indulged. Daudet himself was the first to find himself popular. As he would answer the questions of the others as to the size of the editions of his works he began to feel almost like a culprit, and Zola would exclaim, "Our books will never sell !" No one was more delighted than Tourguenéff when he discovered that people read his works.

Altogether there is a singular charm about these recollections. The translation is admirably done by Laura Ensor, and the illustrations and off-hand sketches lighten up the pages wondrously well.

VI.

SOME RECENT FICTION.

AMONG the best of the numerous libraries for vacation reading may be named The Town and Country series of the Messrs. Appleton, the first four volumes of which are before us. If the first installment is a fair indication of the character of the series, it is safe to say that it does not contain trash, that its literary standard is good, and at times excellent, and that it furnishes clean reading in an inexpensive and convenient form.

"The Steel Hammer,"* which was published in Paris a year or two ago, and is now for the first time presented in an English version, is a detective story of the better class, and takes its name from the instrument with which a murder was supposed to have been committed in the Bois de Boulogne, near Paris. The suicide of the suspected murderer, and the haunted life of the real criminal, furnish material for some powerful dramatic situations, but the final denouement is reserved for the sequel, which constitutes the third of the series, and is entitled "For Fifteen Years."[†]

In this the novelist's art has made plausible the rather improbable scheme by which the widow and child of the innocent man are received into the household of the murderer by the wife, who vaguely suspects the truth, and for years the mask of friendship conceals the settled purpose of the two women, who are seeking, the onerevenge, the other concealment. The few characters of the story are well and clearly drawn, and the book will prove of absorbing interest to the numerous lovers of this class of fiction.

Fewer points to commend are found in "Eve,"‡ a new English novel which has too frequent lapses into the regions of the improbable and too many blemishes of style to permit of classification with the best of the series. The plot is sufficiently involved and entertainingly wrought out, however, to hold the attention of the summer reader, and the leading personages are unusually well portrayed. The author's clumsy device of dumping his objectionable characters over a precipice in order to the final adjustment of the tangled state of affairs which he has helplessly woven, does not commend itself to the good sense of the reader.

In "A Counsel of Perfection"[§] the reader experiences an agreeable surprise, for the decidedly neutral title is not likely to attract one. "Lucas Malet," the pen name of Mrs. Harrison, a daughter of the late Charles Kingsley, is the for-

* "The Steel Hammer." By Louis Ulbach. Translated from the French by E. W. Latimer. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

† "For Fifteen Years." A sequel to "The Steel Hammer." By Louis Ulbach. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

‡ "Eve." A novel. By S. Baring-Gould. New York: D. Appleton & Co.

§ "A Counsel of Perfection." By Lucas Malet. New York: D. Appleton & Co.